

THE PROBLEM WITH HUGO

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2011

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 28-01-2011		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Problem with Hugo				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Mr. Patrick Mellon				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel Kurt Crytzer Center for Strategic Leadership				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Hugo Chavez poses a direct threat to U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere by undermining U.S. sponsored security, political, and economic initiatives. Chavez aims at promoting "anti-Americanism" sentiment and regional instability in the Andean Ridge by supporting transnational terrorism and providing safe havens to regional terrorist organizations. His attempts at promoting regional instability will lead to the possible proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and increased terrorist activities in the region. In concert with our Andean Ridge partners, the U.S. needs to formulate, develop, and implement a defined policy towards Venezuela while at the same time resisting deliberate provocations from Chavez and his supporters. The U.S. needs to effectively leverage and employ all the elements of national power – diplomacy, intelligence, military, political, legal, and economic (DIMPLE) – in order to develop and implement a defined policy towards Venezuela. Incorporating all the elements of national power will allow the U.S. to engage Venezuela in an aggressive manner while incorporating a joint, combined, interagency, and multi-national approach.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Counterterrorism, Counternarcotics, Western Hemisphere					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UNLIMITED	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 38	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

THE PROBLEM WITH HUGO

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Mr. Patrick Mellon
TITLE: The Problem with Hugo
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project
DATE: 28 January 2011 WORD COUNT: 7,914 PAGES: 38
KEY TERMS: Counterterrorism, Counternarcotics, Western Hemisphere
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Hugo Chavez poses a direct threat to U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere by undermining U.S. sponsored security, political, and economic initiatives. Chavez aims at promoting “anti-Americanism” sentiment and regional instability in the Andean Ridge by supporting transnational terrorism and providing safe havens to regional terrorist organizations. His attempts at promoting regional instability will lead to the possible proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and increased terrorist activities in the region. In concert with our Andean Ridge partners, the U.S. needs to formulate, develop, and implement a defined policy towards Venezuela while at the same time resisting deliberate provocations from Chavez and his supporters. The U.S. needs to effectively leverage and employ all the elements of national power – diplomacy, intelligence, military, political, legal, and economic (DIMPLE) – in order to develop and implement a defined policy towards Venezuela. Incorporating all the elements of national power will allow the U.S. to engage Venezuela in an aggressive manner while incorporating a joint, combined, interagency, and multi-national approach.

THE PROBLEM WITH HUGO

The standard U.S. approach to security relations in the Western Hemisphere is at the end of an era. Deep and wide – spread changes in the hemisphere's political and economic environment over the last 20 years have introduced anomalies that the existing U.S. paradigm did not anticipate. Transformations in Latin America...since the Cold War have produced a growing sense that Washington's past experience is no longer adequate to meet problems shaped by an environment that it in part created...The United States is moving in this security milieu without a clear view of the horizon or a plan of action to get there.

—John A. Cope¹

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's current engagement strategy outlines opposition to U.S. counternarcotics initiatives and support to transnational terrorists to the region. This poses a direct threat to U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere by undermining U.S. sponsored security, political, and economic initiatives. Chavez continues to support terrorist organizations, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Hizballah. Chavez's attempts at promoting regional instability may lead to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and increased terrorist activities in the region. His strategy, coupled with his opposition to U.S. counternarcotics initiatives, provides safe havens for narco-terrorist organizations to conduct their illicit activities. The challenge for the U.S. involves continuing to pursue diplomatic resolutions towards Venezuela in concert with our regional partners while resisting the temptation to respond to Chavez's deliberate provocations.

In today's complex global security environment, it is imperative that U.S. policymakers employ all elements of national power – diplomacy, intelligence, military, political, legal, and economic (DIMPLE) – to promote and protect vital national interests. With the rise of non-state actors (e.g., Hizballah and the FARC) as well as

unconventional tactics and warfare, the U.S. is unable to influence policy solely with military solutions. As the U.S. faces 21st century adversaries and national security challenges, it must acknowledge these threats as being...different from the 20th century, nation-state, and military-power constructs it has historically organized against. Acting against such threats in traditional ways will be too costly, slow, and destructive.”²

According to the *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, elements of national power are the instruments the U.S. government uses to apply its sources of power, to include our culture, human potential, industry, science and technology, academic institutions, geography, and national will. They are coordinated to ensure that the U.S. government can achieve our national strategic objectives.³

These elements need coordination at the strategic level (known as the interagency process) and must identify ways that military and non-military capabilities can complement one another. The use of military combat operations should be the last resort, implemented only after all other elements of national power fail to yield positive results in support of national security objectives and interests.

The U.S. needs to employ all elements of national power through the DIMPLe model in order to successfully influence and change our current policy within the region and with Venezuela. By utilizing the DIMPLe method with an effects-based operations strategy (discussed later in the paper), the U.S. will engage Venezuela in an aggressive manner while incorporating a joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational approach. The end state for the U.S. is to develop and execute an effective policy in the region while successfully employing all the elements of national power to support U.S. interests and strategic goals in the Andean Ridge region. It is vital to U.S. national

security initiatives to have a prosperous and democratic Venezuela, which will in turn facilitate “major economic, political, and security benefits to the United States.”⁴ This paper will outline two major areas in which Venezuela poses direct threats to U.S. security interests in the region: opposition to U.S. counternarcotics initiatives and support to transnational terrorists. In addition, the paper will examine different policy alternatives ranging from a renewed emphasis on the Andean Ridge Initiative (ARI) to maintaining the current policy.

Opposition to U.S. Counternarcotics Initiatives

The absence of counternarcotics cooperation between the U.S. and Chavez, as well as a shift in trafficking patterns through Venezuela, enables a growing illicit drug trans-shipment industry.⁵ With its neighbor Colombia having great success against the drug trade, Venezuela is the preferred route for trafficking drugs in and out of the Andean Ridge. A vast number of narcotics transiting through Venezuela end up in the U.S., leading to international security concerns for the Obama Administration. Over ninety-percent of the cocaine entering the U.S. originates in the Andean Ridge area.⁶ The U.S. government estimates that approximately 250 metric tons of cocaine transit Venezuela annually via private aircraft and low profile vessels. These vehicles often go undetected into the U.S. through clandestine airstrips and complex maritime routes.⁷ According to the Joint Interagency Task Force – South, the amount of cocaine moved through Venezuela via private aircraft increased from 27 metric tons in 2004 to 150 metric tons in 2007.⁸ In addition to cocaine, drug trafficking organizations routinely smuggle heroin destined for the United States through major airports in Venezuela.

Another key counternarcotics issue is the recent violence on the U.S. and Mexican border. This represents a direct threat to the homeland. A majority of the

drugs entering Mexico and the U.S. originate in South America and funnel through major logistical hubs in Central and South America.⁹ In addition, there is a significant presence of Mexican drug cartels in Venezuela, Peru, and Honduras that facilitate the movement of illegal narcotics to Mexico and the U.S. Venezuela's opposition to specific U.S. counternarcotics initiatives in the Andean Ridge is a major contributor to the current drug war and violence on the U.S. and Mexican border. The Mexican drug cartels continue to spread their influence beyond their borders, presenting new and complex security issues to U.S. policymakers. The cartels will continue to increase their influence throughout the U.S. and establish footholds within major U.S. cities. This, in turn, will increase the level of violent crimes and activities associated with the drug trade.

Venezuela refuses to cooperate with the U.S. on bilateral counternarcotics issues. In 2007, President Bush signaled that Venezuela failed to abide by obligations under international counternarcotics agreements, which are aimed at limiting the distribution of narcotics and imposing more stringent laws on narco-traffickers. In addition to its unwillingness to participate in bilateral counternarcotics initiatives, the Government of Venezuela is also corrupt and has a weak judicial system. Oftentimes, Venezuelan security forces, such as the National Guard and the Federal Investigative Police, facilitate the drug flow in and out of the country. Elected officials, as well as police and military officers, take bribes in exchange for ignoring drug shipments.¹⁰ In the rare instances that seizures do occur, the drugs are usually returned to the drug traffickers. Recently, Chavez promoted a general accused by the U.S. of helping Colombian guerrillas smuggle cocaine, to lead Venezuela's armed forces. According to

the U.S. Treasury Department, General Henry Rangel assisted with the narcotics trafficking activities of Colombia's FARC rebels.¹¹

Other outside organizations play a major role in Venezuela's drug trade. Colombian guerilla and paramilitary organizations, such as the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN), maintain close ties with some of the most powerful drug trafficking organizations in Venezuela. The two terrorist organizations receive a majority of their funding through the illicit drug trade and are able to thrive economically due to the lack of security structure within Venezuela. According to the reporting from the U.S. Embassy – Bogota, the FARC and ELN routinely cross into Venezuela to conduct drug-related activities, often accompanied by elements of the Venezuelan security forces. Corruption and a lack of oversight and regulation in the Venezuelan government lead to a substantial increase in drug-related activities not only within its own country but, ultimately, in the U.S. and abroad. The Venezuelan government further exacerbates the problem by not engaging these terrorist organizations within its borders due to lack of will, limited resources and corruption within the government.

Venezuela undermines U.S. political initiatives in the Andean Region. Chavez refuses nearly all the counternarcotics cooperation with the U.S. as well as ignores U.S. efforts to effectively work with lower level state and municipal governments.¹² The addendum to The 1978 U.S.-Venezuela Bilateral Counternarcotics Memorandum of Understanding provides one example. The U.S., which did not agree to all the principles of the memorandum, negotiated terms with Venezuela that met most of the U.S. political goals in the region. Senior Venezuelan officials, though, stated that they “would neither sign a bilateral agreement nor cooperate with the U.S. on

counternarcotics.”¹³ Another source of contention focuses on the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), which the Venezuelan government views as a “new” cartel and does not trust to conduct U.S. counter-drug activities within their country. Drug seizures within Venezuela dropped significantly, from 35-40 metric tons of cocaine in 2005 to 20-25 metric tons in 2006, while seizures by other countries of drugs coming from Venezuela points of departure tripled during the same timeframe.¹⁴ This shows that narco-traffickers within Venezuela have found new exit points to export their products. Furthermore, the State Department issued a March 2007 statement outlining that Venezuela, for the third year in a row, failed to adhere to international counternarcotics agreements. By spurning U.S. advances in these areas, Chavez continues promoting his ideology of supporting left-leaning leaders and nations, such as Eva Morales in Bolivia, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua. In doing so, he is in the process of attempting to create an “anti-U.S. sentiment” in the Western Hemisphere, enticing others to follow in his footsteps.

By becoming the premier trans-shipment country for drugs trafficking, Venezuela passes cocaine in massive quantities to the U.S. The increased drug flow fuels the violence on the U.S.-Mexican border. These drug trafficking organizations operating along the borders of the U.S. pose significant security issues within the homeland. South American drug cartels continue transporting their illegal narcotics to Mexico. From there, Mexican drug cartels transport the drugs north and hand them over to U.S. street gangs and organizations, which handle much of the narcotics distribution inside the U.S.¹⁵ Some of the drug trafficking organizations are also foreign terrorist organizations outlined by the U.S. State Department, such as the FARC and the ELN.

By continuing to allow safe havens and unrestricted movement for these organizations within his borders, Chavez promotes the illicit drug activities and terrorist acts. He will not prosecute drug trafficking organizations and, in some cases, he provides funding and training for specific organizations. As the governments of Colombia and United States make positive strides interdicting illegal narcotics in the Andean Ridge, Venezuela along with Bolivia and Ecuador continue to negate recent strategic gains by allowing narco-terrorists to operate freely within their respective borders. With its close proximity to the United States and non-stringent border control measures, Venezuela is an ideal staging area for terrorists to launch major strikes against the U.S. and her interests. Without stringent and well-enforced counternarcotics initiatives, the free-flow of illegal drugs entering the U.S. will increase which will create more complex security and political issues for the U.S. and its Latin American allies. Recently, the GAO issued a report detailing the lack of U.S.-Venezuelan counternarcotics cooperation. The GAO report concluded that Venezuela's lack of support was a significant impediment in the U.S.'s strategy to interdict the drug flow from South America.¹⁶

Venezuela's anti-U.S. sentiment continues to spread across the Western Hemisphere. Chavez directly and indirectly influences many of his neighbors including his key allies: Cuba, Bolivia, and Ecuador. All share the same sentiment regarding anti-U.S. initiatives in the region. Recently, Ecuador did not renew its agreement with the U.S. on the Manta air base, a major political and security setback for U.S. counternarcotics initiatives. Manta was the only Forward Operating Base in South America capable of supporting sophisticated U.S. aircraft conducting drug surveillance missions. President Correa of Ecuador and Chavez are key allies and ardent

supporters on each other's programs and initiatives. Chavez's influence may have been a factor in Correa's decision to not renew the Manta lease with the U.S.

Support to Transnational Terrorists

In May 2006, the State Department added Venezuela to the Section 40A list of countries which are not "fully cooperating with anti-terrorism efforts." The State Department cites "support for Iraqi insurgents, Iran's development of nuclear capabilities, a safe haven for FARC and Basque terrorist groups, and its effort to derail hemispheric efforts to advance counter-terrorism policies in the Organization of American States (OAS)."¹⁷

Chavez's actions foster terrorist activity within the region. Chavez gives the FARC and other drug trafficking organizations unrestricted movement on his borders, especially with Colombia. This allows the FARC and the other terrorist organizations to facilitate drug trafficking, evade Host Nation security forces, and regenerate their forces.¹⁸ In a recent development, a slain FARC leader's laptop computer reinforced the evidence that the Chavez government actively supports the insurgent group. Raul Reyes's computer documented financial transactions between the Venezuelan government and senior FARC leaders dating back to the early 1990s. According to an Associated Press report dated March 3, 2008, Chavez contributed \$300 million United States dollars to the rebels.¹⁹ Credible reports detail the Venezuelan island of Margarita as the center for Hizballah financing and activities within Latin America, in which Hizballah members entered the United States with Venezuelan documentation.²⁰ In 2006, a House of Representatives sub-committee detailed Chavez's support to terrorists, "including false identity documents that could prove useful to radical Islamic groups."²¹ The sub-committee determined, along with concurrence from State

Department officials, that Venezuela “is emerging as a potential hub of terrorism in the Western Hemisphere, providing assistance to the Islamic radical from the Middle East.”²² Recently, the U.S. Treasury Department designated two Venezuelan supporters of Hizballah, Ghazi Nasr Al Din and Faze Kansan, as participants acting on behalf of Hizballah members seeking material, technological, and financial support. The men facilitated the travel of Lebanese Hizballah representatives to Venezuela to query certain companies for financial support. One of the men, Kansan, is designated as a major financier of Hizballah activities.²³ The movement of Hizballah initiatives is also of great concern to the U.S. One glaring example is the direct commercial air flight from Caracas to Tehran, which acts a bridge between Latin America and the Persian world. The travel to and from Iran and Latin America does not require any type of stringent security checks, which allows anyone to come and go freely. Chavez, through his recent relationships and transactions, allows Hizballah members unrestricted access throughout his country. As one senior intelligence official bluntly told a closed panel, “Hizballah is taking advantage of Venezuela’s ties with Iran (Hizballah’s sponsor) to move people and things into the Americas.”²⁴ Venezuela and Iran also launched numerous business partnerships in which Iran financed cement, auto, and tractor factories in Venezuela. The two countries formed a \$2-billion program for social projects funding around Venezuela and Latin America.²⁵ Recently, Chavez and Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, with funding and assistance from Iran, announced plans to create a substitute for the strategically and economically important Panama Canal. This plan to build a new canal in Latin America is but one example of how Iran is influencing strategic interests in the Western Hemisphere.²⁶

Hizballah's expanding global network, especially into Latin America, directly threatens the security of the U.S. Venezuela is a terrorist hub in Latin America and acts as a potential staging base for terrorists wishing to enter the U.S. With its non-existent security checks and passport forgery, terrorist organizations can easily penetrate the borders of the U.S. and gain entry to a number of cities.

Identification and Analysis of Alternatives

One alternative to re-shaping U.S. policy towards Venezuela is a renewed emphasis on the Andean Ridge Initiative (ARI), which aims at combating the illegal drug trade and promoting democracy throughout the region. ARI efforts in interdiction and eradication efforts, along with financial assistance, aim to increase legal economic activity and democratic institutions. The ARI provides financial resources to improve the quality of life for the rural poor and assist in the creation of job opportunities in the Andean Ridge. It also attempts to strengthen democratic institutions, combat corruption, and make justice systems more accessible and efficient for all citizens.²⁷ With inputs from key stakeholders such as the Departments of State and Defense, the U.S. Congress must make a renewed effort to support our initiatives in the Andean Ridge. The proposed policy alternative for the ARI is to "reduce" the amount of funding for military and security initiatives and re-allocate those funds for social spending throughout the Andean Ridge. This policy will strengthen our strategic relationships within the Andean Ridge and allow countries in the region to prosper with financial support from the U.S. The U.S. needs to first engage neighboring countries in order to build a coalition within the region and then focus its efforts on Venezuela. The U.S. will remain a key player in Western Hemisphere affairs, while simultaneously promoting nation-building among its Andean Ridge partners. The ARI derived its goals from Plan

Colombia, a comprehensive, integrated, Colombian action plan to address Colombia's complex and interrelated problems relating to narco-terrorism.²⁸ The plan began as a robust counternarcotics push into the region, along with initiatives aimed at social action and alternative development. The ARI recognizes the problem of illegal drug trade. It also aims to strengthen democratic institutions, combat corruption, and make justice systems more accessible and efficient for all citizens.²⁹ The U.S. describes its Andean strategy as “a three-legged stool” of eradication, military assistance, and alternative development.”³⁰ Most of the ARI funds are earmarked for aerial eradication of drug crops, alternative development, logistical support, hardware, training, social, economic programs, and judicial reform.³¹ The remainder goes to support economic development and the rule of law. The ARI addresses the long-term effects of narco-terrorism and the underlying causes of the narcotics industry and violence in the region, while at the same time, assisting neighboring countries to ward off those same dangers within their borders. Their success is vital to U.S. national interests in promoting the spread of strong democratic institutions, the enhancement of trade and investment opportunities for U.S. businesses and workers, and the reduction of narcotics production and trafficking that threaten our society.³² Sluggish economies produce political unrest that threatens democracy and provides ready manpower for narcotics traffickers and illegal armed groups.³³ Weak democratic institutions, corruption, and political instability discourage investment, contribute to slow economic growth, and provide fertile ground for drug traffickers and other outlaw groups to flourish. The drug trade undermines democratic institutions, fuels illegal armed groups, and adversely affects the economy.³⁴ The overarching goals of the ARI are to promote and support democracy and

democratic institutions, foster sustainable economic development and trade liberalization, and significantly reduce the supply of illegal drugs to the U.S.³⁵

Members of Congress expressed concerns regarding aspects of the U.S. government support to the ARI. Those concerns focused primarily on too much funding towards military and security initiatives and the view that the ARI does not promote enough development and institutional reform.³⁶ The U.S. Congress believes our assistance is too heavily oriented toward Colombia as compared to the rest of the region and trimmed \$55 million from the administration's ARI request.³⁷ The ARI package includes increased security assistance to protect borders in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Brazil. In the ARI regional package, support for military operations continues to outweigh assistance for democracy strengthening, economic development, and other nonmilitary programs. This makes the Departments of Defense (DoD) and State (DoS) major players in the initiative. Finally, the Obama administration signaled an interest in expanding the war on terrorism to the Andean Ridge area and in assisting Partner Nation governments in combating narco-terrorism. The Obama administration made the case for continued support because our policy towards the Andean Ridge region crossed the line from counter-narcotics to counterinsurgency. They believe that this is no longer just about stopping drugs but fighting terrorists as well.³⁸

The alternatives to supporting the ARI would focus on the military and security assistance aspect of the initiative as well as social spending. The first alternative, "*retain*," focuses on maintaining the current level of military assistance and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets and capabilities in theater. This is currently the status quo in the Andean Ridge area. The second alternative, "*robust*,"

aims at increasing the military and security assistance budget by re-allocation of funds from other areas such as social spending. This alternative proposes an increase in ISR assets with specific emphasis on the borders of Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. The increase in ISR assets will include airborne radar and intelligence gathering. The final alternative, “*reduce*,” aims at decreasing the funds for military and security operations in the Andean region. It also calls for the withdrawal of U.S. military and private contractors involved in the ARI as well as a re-allocation of ISR assets to support other Combatant Commanders. The U.S. needs to focus on transferring government funded programs to the respective Partner Nations. This alternative supports a new three-legged stool strategy: support for the Andean Ridge peace process, sound and sustained alternative development programs, and demand-side domestic drug programs.

Another alternative is an effects-based operations strategy. In short, this is executed at the strategic level and incorporates all elements of national power. This methodology looks at Venezuela in a holistic sense and provides the U.S. the opportunity to *shape* the regional engagement strategy in the entire Andean Ridge area of operation rather than *reacting* to issues within the area. Effects-based operations (EBO) is a “process for obtaining a desired strategic outcome or effect on the enemy through the synergistic and cumulative application of the full range of military and non-military capabilities at all levels of conflict.”³⁹ The biggest challenge for U.S. policymakers is to understand that EBO takes into account all the effects – physical, functional, and psychological – that factor into formulating a proactive policy towards Venezuela.⁴⁰ The U.S. is mired in the traditional mindset of “kinetic” operations, with the

notion that overwhelming military power is a decisive element in policy formulation. By developing a policy using the EBO strategy, the U.S. will directly influence the Government of Venezuela through a strong emphasis on the elements of national power – DIMPLE – in a joint, combined, interagency, and multi-national effort.

The U.S. must heavily promote its diplomatic and political relationship with Venezuela. Currently, the relationship between the U.S. and Venezuela is acrimonious with both sides contend that the other is engaged in a political-economic-military struggle for Western Hemisphere hegemony, and that each plays a destabilizing role in the region.⁴¹ The U.S. needs to re-establish positive diplomatic ties in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the Venezuelan government, possibly through the Organization of American States (OAS). According to the Special Inter-American Dialogue Task Force on U.S. Policy in the Western Hemisphere, “the United States should join with other countries of the region to urge President Chavez and his opponents to work toward an agreed-upon agenda for democracy and political reconciliation, consistent with the hemisphere’s Democratic Charter.”⁴² It is imperative that other regional leaders such as Colombia’s President Uribe and Brazil’s President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva apply a collective, regional pressure to Chavez in concert with the U.S.⁴³ It is important to note that responses by the United States and other countries to the internal governance problems of any nation will be most effective if they are developed and implemented multilaterally, fully respect the affected nation’s constitutional principles, and engage a wide range of national political actors. Neighboring countries will almost always have a special part to play, and they should be involved in any initiative – from negotiations to political pressures to sanctions.⁴⁴

The U.S. will be far more effective by incorporating a multilateral policy initiative towards Venezuela rather than acting as a unilateral element with a narrowly focused policy plan. On the legislative side, the U.S., in concert with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the OAS, should form a link between Venezuela's National Assembly and the U.S. Congress.⁴⁵ The National Assembly lacks many of the lock-stop processes and rules of the U.S. Congress and their legislative-executive relations are poor at best.⁴⁶ The U.S. must develop a formal assistance plan to engage the National Assembly and exert U.S. influence and leadership into the Venezuela legislative branch. This plan would also allow U.S. policymakers to the ability to shape regional goals and objectives within the region, ensuring U.S. interests are represented among the participants. To effectively influence Venezuelan internal governance issues, the U.S. must work in unison with allies in the region (e.g., Colombia) and Chavez to develop and implement political and diplomatic solutions, while keeping the constitutional principles of Venezuela at the forefront.

From an informational and intelligence standpoint, the U.S. must take "offensive" measures to counter the growing anti-U.S. rhetoric from Chavez. This is done by launching a pro-U.S. informational campaign within the Andean Ridge region which the U.S. has not been very effective in doing so in the past. The U.S. needs to limit President Chavez's ability to use distrust and hate of the United States as a rallying point for his regime. The U.S. government should institute an information campaign aimed at reassuring the people of Venezuela that the United States supports Venezuela's constitutional processes and wants a stronger, more stable and economically viable Venezuela."⁴⁷ To offset the Chavez-dominated messages, the U.S.

needs to portray an accurate and comprehensive view of initiatives that it is sponsoring in the region. The U.S. must refine its overall strategic vision for Venezuela and the region as well as present an objective stance on critical issues, such as economic aid and counternarcotics issues.

From a military and legal perspective, the U.S. needs to renew its military-to-military relationship with Venezuela. Like most countries in the Andean Ridge, the military plays a major role in the government politics and foreign policy. In particular, Chavez relies heavily on his military to project his power, both internally and externally. In short, the military structure within Venezuela is a key institution that heavily influences the daily political landscape. To effectively influence and change the Chavez government from within, U.S. policymakers need to target the military infrastructure within Venezuela. This is done by re-establishing military-to-military relations with the Venezuelan military. Through Foreign Internal Defense (FID) and Partner Nation training, the U.S. military could instill pro-democratic concepts, civilian authority of the military, military ethics, and military functionality within a democracy, into foreign officers and enable desired effects within the region through a military-political ripple effect within the Venezuelan system.⁴⁸ To do so, the Obama Administration would first have to lift the Article 98 restrictions that exist under the International Criminal Court (ICC).⁴⁹ According to the American Service-Members' Protection Act (ASPA), the President can "waive these restrictions for any country if he certifies that it is in the national security interest of the United States."⁵⁰ Venezuela, with its opposition to U.S. counternarcotics initiatives as well as support to transnational terrorism, would fall into this category and a waiver to the Article 98 restrictions would allow the U.S. direct access to the

Venezuelan military structure. From an educational standpoint, this waiver would also allow Venezuelan military officers to attend the U.S. military's senior service schools (such as the U.S. Army War College or the National War College). In doing so, the U.S. can expose the Venezuelan officers to an environment "where they can learn how the military properly functions to support democratic processes."⁵¹ It would also allow senior U.S. officers the opportunity to better understand the inner workings of the Venezuelan military as well as document existing relationships with other countries (i.e., Iran and China). The long term goal is for the U.S. to influence Chavez into cooperating on counternarcotics initiatives and conducting bi-lateral operations against narco-terrorist threats within Venezuela and the Andean Ridge.

From an economic standpoint, the U.S. must invest resources and time in the future economy of not only Venezuela but the Andean Ridge region as well. The economic aid would be incremental, starting small and increasing depending on the level of cooperation and assistance by various governments in the region. Through its "petroleum-based economy," Venezuela enjoys a fiscal advantage over many of the other countries in the region; however, the volatility of the oil market and lack of diversity within its GDP makes Chavez's economy extremely dangerous and risky. If the oil prices would again decline (such as in 2001), Venezuela's economy would suffer a number of major negative issues. As a major trade partner in both exports and imports with the U.S., the instability of the Venezuelan economy could wreak havoc upon the U.S. financial market as well as those of the entire Andean Ridge region.⁵² The U.S. needs to increase the amount of investment into Venezuela's infrastructures (to diversify a petroleum-based economy), expand investment, humanitarian aid, and trade

within the region, and must work to complete the Free Trade Association of the Americas (FTAA). The FTAA is an effort by private and public companies throughout the Western Hemisphere to create and unite a robust trade region, from Alaska to Chile that would encourage corporate expansion as well as eliminate trade and investment barriers among the participating nations. One downside to the FTAA is that it would further exacerbate the profit margin disparity between the industrialized states and the developing states, thus creating the “haves” and the “have nots.” By promoting greater economic stability, the GDP, foreign investments, and trade will increase in Venezuela and the Andean Ridge region. Economic stability leads to more political stable regimes. In doing so, the U.S. can emerge as a strong economic and political ally within the region and, thus, promote national interests in the region. The economic element must follow the overall U.S. strategic vision for the area and must have careful oversight from the legislative and executive branches.

The current U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela highlights the complexities and issues that surround national security objectives in the Western Hemisphere. The current policy towards Chavez is strained even though Venezuela is one of the top four suppliers of oil to the U.S. and America is Venezuela’s top trading partner.⁵³ The National Security Strategy (NSS) outlines U.S. political, economic, and military objectives within the Western Hemisphere, specifically toward Venezuela and its Andean Ridge neighbors. The NSS embodies the national values of America. The current NSS, dated 2006, identifies core American values, which act as the basis for developing and implementing national interests. National interests are defined as the “nation’s perceived needs and aspirations in relation to its international environment.”⁵⁴

The current NSS outlines several areas that are applicable to Venezuela to include strengthening alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against us and our friends as well as igniting a new era of global economic growth through free market and trade. According to the Inter-American Dialogue Task Force of U.S. Policy in the Western Hemisphere, “Venezuela is a cause for grave concern for those who worry about democracy in Latin America. International observers confirm that Venezuela remains bitterly polarized, and its representative institutions are barely functioning. The country’s unsettled politics could produce instability throughout the Andean region.”⁵⁵ The contentious points surrounding the U.S.’s policy in Venezuela and the Andean Ridge include defeating global terrorism and defusing regional conflicts.

Recommended Approach

The three criteria used to compare the policy alternatives were cost, effectiveness, and political acceptability. The cost is defined as the amount of U.S. resources, time, and political capital dispersed among the different Andean Ridge initiatives such as military assistance, social spending, and diplomatic initiatives. This was rated as the highest priority. Effectiveness is defined as security and stability within the region as it relates to weakening and dismantling terrorist organizations, illegal drug trafficking groups, and promoting democracy throughout the region.⁵⁶ This is measured through the number of terrorist attacks, demobilization of guerillas, eradicating coca crops and interdicting narcotics, and expanding the police and government presence throughout the region.⁵⁷ This was rated slightly more important than political acceptability and less than cost because the bulk of the funding is geared towards military and security initiatives. Political acceptability is defined as how the U.S. Congress, the President and his staff, senior DoD and DoS decision-makers, and the

American public support initiatives in the Andean Ridge region. With the President and his National Security Council tying Venezuela to leftist guerrilla organizations and the international war on terror, the U.S. Congress and the American public are more apt to support initiatives and funding against these organizations in order to preserve our safety and security. This was rated as the last in the prioritization because there will always be discontent about how to deal with Venezuela from specific members of the U.S. Congress and the American public. Overall, the EBO strategy is the best course of action because of its overall effectiveness in the region and incorporation of all the elements of national power to promote whole of government approach in the region. The EBO strategy can also incorporate the military elements of the ARI into the overall policy at less cost.

The EBO strategy is the preferred policy option because it focuses on “obtaining a desired strategic outcome or effect on the enemy through the synergistic and cumulative application of the full range of military and non-military capabilities at all levels of conflict.”⁵⁸ By adopting and implementing an effect-based operations strategy, U.S. policymakers will effectively employ the elements of national power to shape strategic interests in the Andean Ridge region and force Hugo Chavez to comply with U.S. initiatives in the region. This approach takes into account all the elements of national power. EBO focuses on diplomatic and economic initiatives within the region as well as military, intelligence, and information initiatives aimed at defeating regional and transnational terrorist organizations that threaten to de-stabilize the region. One of the negatives of this approach is that it requires extensive interagency cooperation from DoS, DoD, Partner Nations, and the various other governmental and non-governmental

organizations (i.e., OAS). Bureaucratic regulations and organizational structures are impediments to interagency cooperation as well. To streamline specific programs and initiatives, it is imperative to work horizontal across the governmental spectrum to “break-down” the individual stovepipes of excellence, foster interagency collaboration, and promote international engagement with Venezuela and the other Andean Ridge countries.

The other option, the ARI, is aimed at combating the illegal drug trade and promoting democracy throughout the region, is focused too heavily on military and security initiatives. Chavez contends that the ARI is a “military” solution applied to the growing issues in the Andean Ridge. It focuses too much on Blackhawk helicopters and military trainers vice positive and open dialogue.⁵⁹ The ARI has not pulled together elements from intelligence, legal, economic, and diplomacy into the overall plan. Furthermore, this initiative is a regional integrated plan, but has gotten little support from Andean Ridge countries. Chavez contends that the ARI focuses mainly on Colombia’s war on the FARC and the illegal drug flow and fails to address many of the other issues, such as social programs, within the region. The initiative is also not in concert with certain U.S. national security objectives in the region. The cost of supporting the ARI, from a U.S. perspective, has not dramatically reduced the amount of narcotics flowing into the United States. On the contrary, the increased flow of narcotics originating in South America (specifically Colombia and Venezuela) is tied to the increased level of violence on the U.S.-Mexican border. This reflects the ineffective nature of combating the illegal narcotics trade in the region. It has not aligned regional Latin American countries with U.S. supported objectives in the region. The U.S. still lacks a coherent,

overall strategy for the Western Hemisphere, so it is difficult to outline goals and objectives of the ARI when an overall plan has not yet been finalized by the U.S. and allies in the Western Hemisphere.

The current U.S. policy towards Venezuela lacks effectiveness. It does not set out clear guidance and milestones. The U.S. has done little to engage with other Andean Ridge countries to counter Chavez's influence in the region. Chavez, in turn, will continue his anti-U.S. rhetoric in order to maintain domestic support. With the current lack of support to counternarcotics initiatives as well as support to transnational terrorists, it is apparent that the current U.S. policy is not working and needs significant changes. President Obama and his staff face a perplexing policy issue on how to approach Chavez and the anti-Americanism persona of his regime. As far as political acceptability, it is unlikely that key policymakers will support compromises with Chavez (much like Cuba and Fidel Castro). The U.S.'s declaration of seeking energy independence, while reducing the need for U.S. oil imports from Venezuela, seems to cloud any attempts for bilateral relations. It is politically incorrect for the current U.S. administration to seek or re-open discreet diplomatic ties due to Chavez's blatant resistance to U.S. security initiatives on counternarcotics and transnational terrorists.

Implementation Strategy

In supporting the EBO approach, it is important to note the key stakeholders in the implementation strategy. While there are a myriad of players involved from various U.S. governmental agencies and departments, international and non-governmental organizations, and multi-national partners, the issue remains that there is still no coherent strategy to effectively and efficiently combine and synchronize all governmental capabilities to address the U.S.'s foreign policy on Venezuela and

achieve the desired outcome.⁶⁰ The U.S. must interlink all the elements of national power to influence and shape policy goals in Venezuela and the region while promoting regional stability.⁶¹ The U.S. must strike a delicate balance in developing and implementing a policy towards Venezuela while not coming off as “imperialistic” and over-bearing on Latin America issues. It is imperative that the U.S. strike a balance among the different elements of national power and “unify” them in concert with one another to present an overall, coherent, nested policy at the national strategic level. The key responsibility at the national-strategic level is “to develop and apply national security strategy and national military strategy. This must link with policy; otherwise, the result will be a flawed strategy. The level of command is responsible for determining national strategic and military strategic objectives. It establishes the political framework or the employment of military and non-military sources of power in the accomplishment of the national and military strategic objectives.”⁶²

One of the major issues within the region is the uneven development across the political, social, economic, and judicial areas.⁶³ The U.S. needs to negotiate and ratify free trade agreements in order to assist Andean Ridge countries in creating more stable economies in the region. Unstable economies and governments tend to be associated with security threats to include transnational terrorists and criminal networks. It is in the U.S.’s best interest to have stable governments and economies within the Andean Ridge region, specifically Venezuela, to combat these growing security threats. Policymakers must also take into account the spread of anti-Americanism throughout the region, most notably from Chavez and his supporters. This is another area of major concern for the U.S. Policymakers need to take a proactive approach in determining

ways to reverse this sentiment within the region created by Chavez and his “21st-century socialism. The U.S. needs to walk a fine line between engagement with sectors of society that are in opposition to the government and unintentionally legitimizing the anti-American leaders.⁶⁴ The U.S. needs to draft policy recommendations that do not intentionally provoke our neighbors and put positive steps in place to foster collaboration and relationship building in the region. The U.S. must not rely solely on hard power but employ soft power initiatives and measures aimed at influencing Chavez vice provoking him. It is important not only to engage Venezuela directly but also neighboring countries such as Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. By establishing strong alliances within the region (e.g., Colombia), the U.S. along with its Partner Nation allies can exert pressure on Venezuela to conform in meeting specific strategic goals in the Western Hemisphere.

The U.S. needs to work with states regarding public security and military force which will lead to more stable environments that promote economic and social initiatives. The U.S. can create productive civil-military relations with Venezuela and others through education and training. Policymakers can propose increases in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs, which can focus on effective integration of civil and military efforts against internal and external security threats.⁶⁵ The U.S. must also look at the military-military relations within the Andean Ridge. This includes sending U.S. military personnel to train and advise Partner Nation militaries on Foreign Internal Defense (FID) measures such as combating terrorism and narco-trafficking. By establishing a military footprint within Venezuela through FID operations, the U.S. can better project its goals and policies relating to military and

security objectives. Narcotics trafficking is a major issue not just in Venezuela but the region as a whole. As previously discussed, cartels and narco-terrorist organizations operate with relative ease throughout the region with little impediment to their operations and receive funding and expertise from other extremist organizations such as Hezbollah. From failed military operations to weak judicial systems and inadequate security forces, societies within the region have the potential of disintegrating, unable to deal with the murders, kidnappings, corruption, and crime that are associated with these activities.

To achieve an effective, unified foreign policy towards Venezuela, senior policymakers must devise a strategy that incorporates all the elements of national power in relation to the operational environment and foreign partner allies. The responsibility of devising such a policy lies primarily with the National Security Council/Interagency Policy Committees (NSC/IPC). The NSC/IPC guide policy formulation, development, and implementation through the national security decision-making processes with final approval from the members of the National Security Council (NSC) and the ultimately, the President of the United States.

The NSC/IPC derive their authorities from the National Security Presidential Directive 1 (NSDP 1) which outlines the “development and implementation of national security policies by multiple agencies of the United States government. The NSC/IPC shall be the main day-to-day forum for interagency coordination of national security policy. They shall provide policy analysis for consideration by the more senior committees of the NSC system and ensure timely responses to decisions made by the President.”⁶⁶ The NSC/IPC for the Western Hemisphere must use its diplomatic,

military, developmental, and other instruments of national power to find cooperative ways to help shape strategic goals in Venezuela and the region.⁶⁷ The policymakers must focus on development, tampering down anti-Americanism, improving civil-military relations, and combating narcotics trafficking and potential terrorist threats.⁶⁸

The NSC/IPC plays a vital role in synchronizing and coordinating all available joint, interagency capabilities under the elements of national power; however, they lack the decision authority. The approval of a Venezuelan strategy rests with the NSC, which “is the President’s principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with his senior national security advisors and cabinet officials. The function of the NSC is to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies related to the national security.”⁶⁹ The NSC, in concert with other governmental and non-governmental agencies within the U.S. security apparatus, is responsible for providing the President with a definable, effective, clear policy towards Chavez and Venezuela. The Director of National Intelligence (DNI), who acts as the principal intelligence advisor to the President, must play a part in the policy formulation as well as other key stakeholders within the interagency.

The defined policy needs to address military assistance for the Andean Ridge, while incorporating increased spending on governance, humanitarian, and developmental programs. The foreign governments need to enhance their capacity to assume more costs and accept specific military and security programs as their own. The aim of this is to manage the transition in a transparent, predictable manner that minimizes disruptions and ensures continuity in key programs vital to the U.S government’s counternarcotics and counterterrorism policies. The policy must stress

strategic partnership, which will ensure that the Partner Nation allies remain U.S. strategic regional partners and a sufficient level of U.S. influence will remain in place to combat counternarcotics and counterterrorism threats.⁷⁰ This effort focuses on a long-term, steady-state relationship with the Andean Ridge countries. The end state is a strategic partnership that works together to achieve bi-lateral regional security objectives. This policy will emphasize a greater diplomatic presence in the Americas and support institutional change throughout the region. This policy needs to advance democracy, security, and opportunity from the bottom-up and through Partner Nation countries and the Organization of American States (OAS). One drawback to this policy is it “rewards” Chavez for his non-compliance and blatant disregard to U.S. counternarcotics and counterterrorism initiatives. The U.S. is rewarding Chavez’s behavior by investing monetary and non-monetary resources into Venezuela and other countries in the region who share similar anti-Americanism ideas. Instead, the U.S could take more of a “carrots and sticks approach” by looking at options such as imposing more stringent trade restrictions and harsher penalties for non-cooperation on specific narcotics and terrorism issues.

Conclusion

Hugo Chavez poses serious security, political, and economic issues for the U.S. In addition to being a major drug-transit country with corrupt military and government officials, Venezuela facilitates in-country access and support to state and non-state actors that share a common desire of weakening the U.S. and western capitalism. Chavez continues supporting terrorist organizations such as the FARC and allows them unrestricted movement within the borders of Venezuela. In addition, radical Islamic activists such as Hizballah have established a presence in Venezuela over the past five

years while Chavez looked the other way. Chavez's relations with Ahmadinejad are strong, particularly after Caracas and Tehran announced a new "ten-year strategic alliance." The movement of Hizballah militants in and out of South America via Venezuela travel channels poses direct threats to the U.S. homeland security.⁷¹ The U.S.'s dependence on oil imports is also of great concern. The U.S. relies on oil from weak and unstable states, such as Venezuela. Countries that are "at risk of instability" house approximately forty-three percent of global oil reserves.⁷² By relying on these "unstable" countries, the U.S. is susceptible to oil-based diplomacy. The U.S. needs to find alternative markets in the event that Venezuela severely decreases or ceases oil imports to the U.S.

The framework for U.S. policy in Venezuela must include strategic alliances with Partner Nation allies in the Andean Ridge. Initiatives and policy plans must foster collaboration and a willingness to work together in the best interests of the region. The challenges the U.S. faces with Venezuela cannot be dealt solely with military power. Furthermore, the U.S. does not have political power to deal unilaterally with countries such as Venezuela. The Obama Administration needs to find ways to work collaboratively with regional partners in order to help them address immediate issues and future development in the social, economic, and political arenas.⁷³ The EBO strategy is the preferred policy option because it employs the cumulative application of the full range of military and non-military capabilities at all levels of conflict."⁷⁴ The EBO will allow U.S. policymakers to employ the elements of national power to shape strategic interests in the Andean Ridge region and force Hugo Chavez to comply with U.S. initiatives in the region. EBO covers the full spectrum of U.S. power under the DIMPLE

model. EBO focuses on diplomatic and economic initiatives within the region as well as military, intelligence, and legal initiatives aimed at defeating regional and transnational terrorist organizations and drug cartels that threaten to de-stabilize the region.

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